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DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/ARP AND PM/RSAT

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2019/04/08
TAGS: PREL MARR MOPS KG MU
SUBJECT: ALTERNATIVES TO MANAS AIRBASE: OMAN

REF: STATE 30022

CLASSIFIED BY: Gary A. Grappo, Ambassador, U.S. Department of State,
U.S. Embassy - Muscat; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

¶1. (S) The Ambassador delivered relevant reftel points April 8 to Minister Responsible for Defense Affairs Sayyid Badr bin Saud al-Busaidi and requested timely approval for the visit of a U.S. military site survey and airfield assessment team to the Sultanate. Sayyid Badr said he understood the difficulties posed by the potential loss of the Manas airbase in Kyrgyzstan and asked if the U.S. had approached other countries in the region for the possible staging of support operations for Afghanistan, specifically mentioning the al-Udeid military facility in Qatar. The Ambassador responded that the U.S. had not approached Qatar on this issue, but confirmed that we were looking at other sites in the region, particularly for the aerial refueling mission as Oman was not currently being considered for this purpose.

¶2. (S) Asked about the potential volume of flights and time line for the start-up of operations if the U.S. were to seek use of either Thumrait or al-Masirah as an alternative to Manas, the Ambassador stated that these questions could be addressed in detail during the U.S. assessment team visit. The Ambassador also assured Sayyid Badr, who expressed concerns about the physical accommodation of large numbers of personnel, that U.S. War Reserve Materiel (WRM) sites in Oman and elsewhere contained sufficient equipment to quickly house those working or transiting at either base.

¶3. (S) Sayyid Badr pledged to respond to our proposal after careful review and consultation with relevant senior officials. He also noted towards the conclusion of the meeting that Oman would prefer that only U.S. personnel, rather than nationals of Spain, France or other countries, be resident at an operational support base in the Sultanate.

¶4. (S/NF) Comment: Post has delivered a similar message to the Royal Office, given its role in security matters, through GRPO channels. Sayyid Badr did not indicate when he would formally reply to our request for approval for an assessment team visit; however, the Ambassador stressed the visit would need to be conducted relatively soon. End Comment.

GRAPPO